

## Ladder to the Stars

by iwantyourovaries

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Summary: Carter didn't become a leader instantaneously. But with Kat by his side, he might just be able to do this. Carter suspected that the debriefing after their first 'mission' entailed a lot more yelling than military protocol dictated.

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The automatic door hissed shut, but Carter would've liked nothing better than to slam it. Maybe that, at least, would startle his new subordinate to her senses. He glared at her, the muscles in his jaw tense. His feeling of righteous anger was only fuelled by the angry, scabbed burn on his left arm.

"As my second in command," he started, looming over the girl, no, soldier, sprawled in the chair in front of him, "it is your sworn duty to support my leadership. When you were chosen for this position, it was because you promised to be committed to this team."

He fumed behind the Spartan mask, lamenting the mission gone wrong. Fortunately, it was only training, but next time she questioned his orders? How many would pay the price for her impertinence? His was the only injury this time, but his thoughts were plagued with phantoms of 'next time'.

"What do you have to say for yourself?" His lips were set in a thin line, pressed tightly together to prevent scathing words from tumbling forth.

Catherine snapped her head up, almost snarling at him "What am I supposed to do, blindly follow you? We are Spartans, not sheep! We have all been educated extensively in tactics and warfare, so I do not understand why you refuse to take anyone's input but your own." She did not finish this little speech of hers by lowering her head,

or any respectful gesture. She sat in the standard debriefing chair, arms crossed, looking expectantly at him, fire in her eyes.

He struggled to find words for what they'd been taught from an early age to respect. The chain of command was the closest thing to religion that most of the Spartans had. And she was questioning this?

"I am in command! You are supposed to follow my lead! Always!" A rational part of his mind told him not to get too worked up, but he also knew that he was passed reining in his anger. For once, he wanted to act like the petulant 17-year old he was, rather than his actual rank.

She stood with a surge, the metal chair screeching loudly on the concrete floor. "So I'm supposed to follow you, even if I don't know what you're doing?" Ludicrous. Kat took pride in her tactical knowledge, but this infuriating man wouldn't even listen!

"Especially then." Carter growled, towering over her. Only a few inches separated their glaring faces. "If you don't tell me when you're going to improvise," he gestured to his newly acquired burn sharply, "then someone will die, Catherine! Those are my Spartans, and dammit, I will not let them die in vain because someone didn't like the plan!"

He was breathing harshly at this point. He could easily run a marathon, but his anger was an explosive force. Just when he opened his mouth to begin another tirade, though, he was silenced by Catherine smiling and walking over to the door. At his confused look, she smirked, and pulled her shoulder up in a one-armed shrug.

"Just had to make sure that you actually care for the people under your command," she explained. "After all, you Alphas have a bit of a cold-hearted reputation."

He was absolutely flummoxed. This had been a test? He cocked his head to the side, "Really? You couldn't have just asked?"

She broke into a small grin, deigning not to answer. "Just make sure you include me in the planning stage in the future," she informed him, walking to the door, and palming the control pad.

"Oh, and Carter?" she called back, turning slightly to face him. "Call me Kat."

He simply shook his head. He knew command would be a burden, but what had he gotten himself into this time?

**\*\*A/n: Please review!\*\***

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file.